

LETTERS

In Search for "Lightness," Don't Forget Past Lessons Learned

Dear Sir:

The Chief of Staff has announced his intention to change the Army as we know it. It is going to happen. No amount of bickering or "turf-protecting" will stop this change to the force structure. General Shinseki has thrown down the gauntlet. How do we, the commissioned and noncommissioned officers in the armor and cavalry, respond? This letter is a sergeant's response.

The centerpiece of the new force structure will be a new "light platform." The requirements imposed on this new platform as published in the 22 Nov 99 edition of the *Army Times* listed the following requirements: it must be deployable by C-130; it must utilize "off-the-shelf" technology; it must enjoy high tactical mobility and agility; it must have a significantly shorter logistical "tail" than current platforms; it must be highly reliable; it must employ a direct rapid-fire gun to support infantry operations; and it must be able to "own the night." This vehicle is to replace our existing fleet of main battle tanks and Bradley Fighting Vehicles in the not-so-distant future.

The armor and cavalry community has always prided itself on having the best equipment and the best soldiers. Our M1A1 MBT and M2/M3A2 BFV are the most lethal instruments of ground warfare ever fielded by any army. Of the listed requirements, these two awesome platforms meet only three: high tactical mobility and agility, reliability, and the ability to "own the night." The best features of these two platforms go largely unmentioned by the list of requirements, mainly survivability and lethality.

The new "light" vehicle is a good idea because, quite simply, we are too heavy. However, the Abrams and Bradley are the way they are because of lessons learned on previous battlefields. These lessons were hammered home during Operation Desert Storm, when more than a few tank rounds and the odd guided missile strike were absorbed by the armor of our tanks. I shudder to consider the outcome of a similar conflict with a fleet of up-gunned "light platforms" as the vanguard of the main attack. We cannot count on seeing and killing every enemy outside his maximum effective range. Inevitably we will have to close with the enemy and finish him off. The ability to absorb a hit is one attribute we should pause to reconsider before phasing it out.

The firepower on our present systems is without equal. The M256 120mm main gun is, in my opinion, the best tank gun ever. It kills whatever it hits. Unfortunately, the Army doesn't buy any of the infantry-supporting ammunition that would make the M1A1 even more formidable. Unlike most other nations, our primary infantry and cavalry fighting vehicle has a serious anti-armor capability, the TOW missile. As it stands, the front-running

design for the "light platform," a LAV-series design, doesn't include the one-two punch of TOW missiles and the Bushmaster cannon.

The new "light platform" will undoubtedly have a sensor array never before seen by ground forces. The general idea behind such a collection of technology would, of course, be target detection and destruction — he who is seen first, dies first. The "light platform" would stay safely out of harm's way and eliminate the enemy from afar using advanced detection, identification, and killing technologies. This is an ideal situation. We, as an army, cannot allow ourselves to believe we will always have the ideal battlefield with competing maximum ranges, a clear intelligence picture, an inferior opponent, and easily navigable and negotiable terrain. We should always "plan for the worst, hope for the best." The history of modern warfare is replete with errors made because of such thinking, that the good guys will always win.

There are successful examples of light armored vehicles faring well on the mechanized battlefield. The campaigns across North Africa during World War II made extensive use of light vehicles, especially in the recon/counter-recon role. The South Africans, with their fleet of light vehicles, proved quite successful against Cuban and Angolan tanks. And against light infantry, a light vehicle can be every bit as intimidating as the heaviest of tanks. An example of this would be the platoon of BTR-60s against our own Marines on the island of Grenada in 1983. In these instances, the "ideal" was enjoyed by the light vehicles. The BTRs on Grenada are an exception — they were quickly destroyed by close air support. Our fleet of "light platforms" should not be designed with only the ideal battlefield in mind.

The ideal battlefield rarely exists. When light vehicles form the vanguard of any army, defeat often follows because these light vehicles cannot withstand the unexpected. Many examples can be found during the Arab-Israeli wars, where so many BTRs and BRDMs were ravaged by overwhelming artillery strikes and hidden AT teams. Further examples can be found throughout the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, where many a light vehicle — used because of their mobility and deployability — was lost to teams of RPG-wielding guerrillas at near point-blank range. A more recent battlefield example would be that of Chechnya, where, a few years ago, the Russian Army found themselves in a less-than-ideal situation and lost many soldiers and machines because their opponent wasn't as inferior as first thought.

During the recent action in the Balkans, the Marines demonstrated their abilities by conducting exercises in Greece and Albania. One of the most enduring images in my mind's eye is that of an LAV-25 trying to negotiate a muddy incline. All eight tires were spinning quite uselessly. If the wheeled vehicle can't get to a fight because it rains and bogs down if it goes off-road, what good is it? Do we want an all-wheeled force road-bound during the

rainy seasons in a combat zone (Korea or China)?

The Chief of Staff is absolutely correct. We are too heavy. We need to redesign our force. I believe in what he is doing for the Army. I just wanted to highlight some points to remember before the new vehicle is determined early in the new year. I know General Shinseki has the most knowledgeable of experts at his side making his vision a reality, and he has us, the armor and cavalry community, to help keep in mind hard lessons learned from battles past. That is how I see it, from a sergeant's perspective.

SGT DWAYNE C. THACKER
Scout Platoon, 1-37 Armor
Friedberg, Germany

We Already Have Light Armor: It's Called an M113

Dear Sir:

The evening news on 14 January 2000 told of exercises taking place at Fort Knox, wherein numerous light armored vehicles from around the world were being tested to determine their suitability for equipping a rapidly-deployable mechanized brigade.

The Army's leadership is to be commended for recognizing and addressing the need for an armored force that possesses a high degree of strategic mobility. Some forward-thinking *ARMOR* authors have been advocating such capability for many years, so the development is welcome, if long overdue.

However, it is unclear why it is deemed necessary to test, select, and procure 800 new combat platforms, at a reported cost of more than two billion dollars, when one of the finest (if not *finest*) light armored vehicles ever built — the M113A3 armored personnel carrier — is already in the inventory.

M113 variants can accomplish the mission essential tasks that would be required of the high-mobility armored brigade, and do so without adding another vehicle type to the logistical equation or costing the taxpayer big bucks. Buying a new vehicle that would be unique to the proposed rapid deployment force would seem to be logistically unsound and fiscally irresponsible.

STANLEY C. CRIST
Lancaster, Calif.

M113's Versatility Meets Test For Lighter Force Initiative

Dear Sir:

Two articles of interest: The first from *National Defense*, Nov. '99, pp. 14-16, "Abrams Replacement May Not Be Tank; Army under pressure to make heavy armor lighter, more deployable;" the second in *ARMY Magazine*, Dec. '99, beginning on p. 33, is "Moving Toward High Performance Power Projection:

The Case For Medium-Weight Army Forces." I am not sure if the fact that all four of the vehicle photos shown in the second article were 'wheeled' displays a bias toward wheels, as compared to tracks, or if the authors despaired of finding anything else that is different from the current Army fleet.

Before we go about reinventing the wheel (no pun intended), I hope that the versatile M113A3 is not ignored in the Army's future plans.

DON LOUGHLIN

Story Correctly Reflected The FUBAR Factor

Dear Sir:

CPT Marshall Miles' article ("Armor Takes Flight," Jan-Feb 2000) is now on my mandatory reading and discussion list for my high school ROTC seniors. Seldom outside of novels have I seen recently how the "fog of war" and Murphy's Law can strike within a unit on a mission with such worldwide implications if other things had gone wrong. Credit was appropriately given to the unit's NCOs throughout the article. Sounds like a real good team effort.

Miles writes with an informal style that can retain the attention of future soldiers, and creates a clear picture of what goes on in the Army today at company/troop level. I want my graduates to have a little bit of foreknowledge about how FUBAR (Fouled Up Beyond All Recognition) things can get. I especially liked seeing the lessons learned, as in "Be ready."

As an aside, I for one appreciate the Coyotes protecting my son's Blackhawk Company at Rinas Airfield.

JOHN C. RUSSELL
LTC, AR (Ret.)
Owensboro High School
Owensboro, Ky.

Author Contests Review Of Book on Gulf Air War

Dear Sir:

I was very happy to receive a copy of CPT Scott Maxwell's review of my book, *Storm Over Iraq*, which you published in the September-October issue of *ARMOR* magazine.

Unfortunately, after reading the review, I was uncertain whether or not he had read someone else's book rather than my own. Further, as the former Harold Keith Johnson Visiting Professor at the U.S. Army Military History Institute (1987-88), and a frequent lecturer at the U.S. Army War College, I was particularly surprised and disappointed that he resorted to a largely *ad hominem* attack on my alleged "blatant parochialism." For the sake of your readers, I thought I'd correct a few of the misimpressions and misstatements that he has made.

Right at the beginning of his review, CPT Maxwell writes that "*he [Hallion] believes... navies and armies (to include their air power, to a great extent) are obsolete in the context of modern war.*" In fact, **nowhere** in the text do I make any such sweeping claim. Rather, I state right up front that the Gulf War "*was not the victory of any one service, but rather the victory of coalition air power projection by armies, navies, and air forces.*" (p. 1). Further, I discuss in some detail (and most favorably) the development of Army doctrine prior to the Gulf War, the Air Force-Army partnership on the so-called "31 Initiatives," Army attack and troop helicopter operations in the war, the technical development of key Army systems such as the Apache, Patriot, and MLRS/ATACMS, etc.

CPT Maxwell opines that "*Iraq was an open desert with a cooperative enemy [whatever that means] and relatively decent weather.*" In fact, the weather at the time of the Gulf War was the worst since weather recording in that region has been undertaken. It had a profound impact on military operations as discussed in the book. I am puzzled by his comment on "finite ordnance resources," as this had little impact on air operations, and my understanding is that the vast bulk of ammunition taken into the theater was, in fact, transported out of it afterwards.

For the record, it is worth noting the difference between CPT Maxwell's comments, and those of your colleagues at *Military Review*, who judged the book to be "*Authoritative and absorbing.... Hallion's argument is provocative and challenges many current perceptions of military power projection. Well written, timely and incisive.... A rare find.*" Finally, in defense of the editors at the Smithsonian Institution Press, I feel I should point out that they never would have consented to publish a book as one-sided as CPT Maxwell alleges.

I was appreciative of your editorial note at the beginning of the review that "This review was received before the Serbs agreed to withdraw from Kosovo." That really seemed to say it all, and, in fact, almost (but not quite) obviated the need for this letter. The third edition of *Storm Over Iraq* is soon to be released, and, judging by events in the Balkans and elsewhere, it is remarkable how the real lessons of the Gulf are more, not less, relevant as time goes by.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

RICHARD P. HALLION, SES
The Air Force Historian

Is Crew Gunnery Being Sacrificed In Drive to Save Money?

Dear Sir:

"Is there anyone down-range?!?"

"Is there anyone down-range?!?"

Such is my response after reading both the FORSCOM STRAC XXI and the Armor Cen-

ter counter-proposal in the September-October issue of *ARMOR*. As an Armor officer, I am concerned that our quest to save money at the expense of individual and crew-level training has finally gone too far. This latest proposal represents only one more step in what has been a steady deterioration of main gun ammunition availability for tank gunnery throughout my 16-year career. How much farther will we go before we finally declare that simulation gunnery equals qualification?

We're "harvesting" rounds for all the wrong reasons — to save money and in the name of more robust TTXIs and XIs... and worst of all, for CALFEXs. Doctrinally, this means we are sacrificing crew and individual training, which is supervised and executed by the platoon sergeant, platoon leader, company 1SG, commander, and company master gunner in favor of training that is the purview of the battalion and brigade commanders.

In the words of GEN(R) Cavazos, "Nothing ever got more efficient by moving it to a higher headquarters." While there's no discounting the importance of the brigade and battalion commanders' experience and guidance in the conduct of gunnery, the ultimate value of the training to the *entire crew* during platoon gunnery, and especially CALFEXs, pale when compared to that obtained during tank qualification gunnery.

Moreover, the U.S. Army quite simply does not have the gunnery ranges, nor as important, the targetry resources to conduct viable CALFEXs. At Ft. Hood, the largest post in the U.S., the ranges are substandard for TTVIII gunnery, mediocre at best for platoon gunnery, and no one single range supports live-fire CALFEXs. In fact, even after combining two range complexes (the only way to have space for a CALFEX), range and land restrictions limit the viability of that level of training exercise. Compounded with safety restrictions, CALFEXs often become little more than closely orchestrated, albeit dazzling fireworks demonstrations. But the value to the crews is marginal when compared to the value gained from crew gunnery. In addition, we don't have the AAR resources available during the company- and platoon-level gunnery that we have during crew gunnery, further degrading the training.

The proposals further fall apart when one considers the *real* PERSTEMPO in units and a no-kidding crew stability reality check. Commanders in the field face a nigh-on impossible challenge to *truly* maintain a majority of their crews stable even from one gunnery cycle to the next, much less one annual cycle to the next. Crew turbulence is a fact of life, and no amount of "on paper" accounting can prove otherwise. The STRAC XXI base assumption of saving rounds based on a crew-stability-formula is flawed from the outset.

The move to simulate crew qualification to "fund" live fires is contrary to the value units

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gain from better suited force-on-force training or simulations in unit-level trainers such as SIMNET or CCTT. In the simulation facilities, a unit can truly maximize the value of having a field grade officer looking over the shoulder of a young platoon leader or company commander who gains invaluable, well-mentored training at very low costs in terms of time, equipment, and personnel. In addition, those simulators, because of their capability to stress the entire crew and to mitigate safety concerns, allow leaders to truly learn from their mistakes. When we conduct force-on-force training in the field, we have tankers doing what tankers enjoy most, "boar hogging" in the bush (as my old platoon sergeant used to call it), shooting at an enemy that shoots back. Out in the field, multi-echelon training comes to the fore without artificial time, land and safety restrictions of the live-fire range. This is the place to conduct unit-level training.

To quote MG Grange, "I want somebody to be master of their weapon, not just to say I've qualified with it." These latest moves to "harvest" ammunition take us one step lower than qualification, substituting instead, "verification." This flies in the face of reason when one considers the recent AH-64 debacle in Kosovo where we would not commit troops because we had untrained crews. When the bullets are black instead of blue, leaders and soldiers get real particular about how well trained we are. Never were tankers so concerned about their boresight than in the early days of the Gulf War. That isn't a skill you learn on the simulation range.

Our leadership needs to step up to the plate. We have to quit saving money at the expense of vital qualification training. This latest "innovation" with a "XXI" label attached is not a move in the right direction. It doesn't take a math major to figure out how many bullets a unit needs to fire two gunnery qualifications a year. These rounds aren't that expensive when compared to the cost of a single missile. Why do we attempt creative accounting when the quantity and costs are known expenses? When compared with the cost of missiles, our tank rounds are a bargain. We shouldn't be cutting corners and pinching pennies with our soldiers' lives.

JOHN R. TIBBETTS
LTC, Armor
Alexandria, Va.

Reconnaissance and Cavalry: They Ain't the Same Thing!

Dear Sir:

The July-August 1999 issue of *ARMOR* had eight separate articles about scouts, scout vehicles, cavalry recon, cavalry reorganization, and doctrine. My favorite was CPT Bill Williams' article, "The Battalion Scout Troop," on pages 37-40. His proposed scout/tank mixture sounds so much like the old divisional cavalry troop organization we had under

ROAD and H-series TO&E, before we shuffled everything under Division '86, Army of Excellence, and Force XXI.

I sense that the old Cavalry branch is getting confused. I suggest that the fundamental dilemma with "cavalry" and "recon" is that we have lost sight of their historical roles and evolution and mistakenly assume that they are synonymous. They are not!

My trusty 1960 version of *Webster's New World Dictionary* defines "reconnaissance" as "...the examination or survey of a region, especially in military science, for obtaining information about the enemy." "Reconnoiter" is defined, "...in military science, to observe or scout (an enemy position, etc.)."

In the olden days, when military forces walked around searching for the enemy and communication depended on messengers, horsemen were the obvious choice for passing along information, to include performing recon. This did not, however, make them "Cavalry." Cavalry is an arm of mounted soldiers, originally on horseback and now motorized, mechanized, and armored. Cavalry's historic mobility and shock action (and its 20th century armor-protected firepower) make it suitable for missions such as security, counter enemy cavalry, counterattack infantry, reserve, pursuit, exploitation, economy of force, etc., etc. Conversely, while a cavalryman makes a speedy messenger because he is already mounted, that does not give him the "communication" mission, either.

Recon, (scouting) is performed by all sorts of units. Infantry squads have "point men" and platoons send out patrols. Tank and Infantry battalions have organic "scout" platoons. Brigades now have organic "recon" companies (more on that, later). Chemical and engineer troops perform specialized technical recon, as needed. Aviation conducts aerial recon, and Rangers conduct deep recon. Then there are radio intercepts, satellites, etc., etc. Let's consider recon by stealth versus recon by combat.

Before radio, scouts infiltrated into an area and had to return to report. All of this took time and risked revealing the commander's intent. The commander had to wonder if the situation had changed since the scout's recon. A mounted scout was a bit faster, but also easier to detect. Scout teams could be enlarged and could leave observers behind to update the commander and guide his approach, but this larger scout force could also be more readily detected.

Once radio evolved into a portable and reliable link, scouts could keep the objective under observation and report the developing situation. But all too often, even though reporting, the scout still watched helplessly as the enemy conducted some sort of actions that hindered the commander's intent (reinforce a position or destroy a bridge, for example).

It seems intuitively advantageous to have the scout actually interdict enemy activity in advance of the main body's attack. This evolved

into the "coordinated attack," with infiltrated elements launching surprise supporting attacks. Radio later permitted much more closely coordinated (synchronized) operations, but the dilemma remained: how much combat power to put with the recon element? To maintain stealth, combat power must be limited because large combat elements risk early detection.

In all the above situations, the REAL issue is time. Time to recon, time to revise the plan, time to task organize, time to maneuver, etc., etc. The solution was often to seize the initiative, move in attack formation, and let audacity carry the day. This is what "getting inside the enemy's decision loop" is really all about. The scouts have no time to do anything but provide close-in security along the route and flanks while tempo takes care of the rest. This is exactly the role at which armored cavalry excels: audacious high-tempo shock action. Armored cavalry brings along a tremendous combined arms capability in a fully organic combined arms team. No "tailored" or "ad hoc team" nonsense here. However, armored cavalry is about as stealthy as an equal-sized armor task force because that is exactly what it is!

So, where does that leave stealthy scouts and recon? I suggest that a scout platoon at battalion level is about right, and its mission is "security." The scouts patrol around the battalion and move in advance of the battalion until contact is imminent. They then allow the maneuver companies to pass through and attack.

I also suggest that the recently created divisional brigade recon troop is redundant to the division's cavalry squadron since it results in stealthy recon elements crossing the same ground already covered by heavy cavalry. The brigade commander's role should be arraying battalions against enemy forces already identified by the division commander. If anything, the resources of the brigade recon troops might be merged with the division cavalry squadron either to increase the squadron's combat power, turn it into a two-squadron regiment, or even a fourth ground maneuver brigade. (Only separate brigades need a cavalry troop because there is no parent divisional cavalry squadron.)

It all comes down to scale and perspective. While the Army may be conducting a "deep operation," the squadrons of the armored cavalry regiment are "traveling," the troops are in "traveling overwatch," and the platoons are "bounding." When the army commander orders a recon in force, the regimental commander conducts area or zone recon and the squadron commander conducts movement to contact. The troop commander is conducting a hasty attack, and the platoons are firing and moving by bounds.

But there is no inherent link between "cavalry" and "recon." The former is a combat organization, and the latter is a common task or mission. Once we get the concept straight, we can focus on appropriate equipment. Now, if only we can change the name of the Future

Scout/Cavalry Vehicle (FSCV) to either one or the other, we might get somewhere.

CHESTER A. KOJRO
LTC, AR, USAR (Ret.)

Medium Brigade Combat Teams: Reinventing the ACR?

Dear Sir:

Normally your magazine gets letters of opinion from captains and colonels. However, looking at things from the bottom up, I have to express some confusion at the "Brigade Combat Team" concept. My understanding is that these units are to be able to deploy to low intensity conflict and "operations other than war" as is, and deploy as part of a heavier force in the event of a full-scale mechanized war to provide screening and reconnaissance elements. To me, this sounds like a job tailor made for an ACR. They are brigade-equivalent units, their combined arms are integrated at lower levels and they have more organic support elements than a traditional brigade. Reconnaissance and screening are part of their METL, and they are traditionally used to operating forward and in smaller units. I fail to understand why re-equipped ACRs aren't being proposed rather than reinventing the wheel with BCTs.

ROBB D. SHIMP
SPC, CAARNG
C Co, 1-149 AR

NOTE: This statement does not reflect the official policy of the Military Department of California, the California National Guard, or the United States Army.

Red Army's BMP Was Not The First IFV Fielded

Dear Sir:

On Sep. 30, 1991, I retired as Program Manager Tanks and Combat Weapons Systems from the Bundeswehr. During my frequent international meetings, I had the privilege of getting to know COL Frank Hartline very well (see "Letters," Sep-Oct 99, p. 3). I fully agree with his first sentence, that for us "old-timers" the best policy is silence. Like him, I do not follow this advice right now.

Generally speaking, I am in agreement with Frank, but I do not want to comment on the background for U.S. requirements for the M2/M3 Bradley. But I do want to point out that there were IFVs before the BMP was fielded with the Red Army.

Undoubtedly, Generaloberst Guderian was the driving force behind equipping the Panzerdivision with troops that could follow the tanks and fight dismounted, or mounted if the need so arose. He used half-tracks for Panzer-grenadiere and Panzerpioniere, but did not find a solution for towed artillery. So he used the JU 87 "STUKA" as airmobile artillery...

In 1956, the Bundeswehr was equipped mostly with U.S. weapon systems. We needed vehicles to accompany the M41 tanks in cavalry units and the M47/48A1s in armor units. The half-tracks just were not up to standard. So we looked and found the Hotchkiss to accompany the M41s in cav units and the Hispano Suiza HS 30 for the Panzergrenadiers. The HS 30 was a very low, full-tracked vehicle with not much armor, no roof, and a powerpack that was not very reliable, but it was better than any half-track. In the 1960s, we decided to develop a tank that was lighter and faster than M48A2 and M60, with a diesel engine and British 105mm gun — the Leopard 1 (A1-A6). For a companion, we developed the Marder Schützenpanzer, which was able to follow Leopard 1 in battle, could carry an infantry squad, and could fight with its 20 mm gun, MILAN ATGW (added later), and the individual weapons of the infantry squad mounted, with a small squad of one NCO and six Panzergrenadier dismounts when neces-

sary ... Now we need a new IFV — if we just could find the money for it! But that is another story.

So, the Bundeswehr did not follow the Red Army and their BMP design; we followed our own ideas and we did not put a "gun" on the MARDER bigger than 20 mm. But that today is not big enough any more, so a follow-on was developed, the RH 503-35 mm with interchangeable 50 mm tube plus telescoped ammo. The IFV should foremost fight enemy infantry and AT; for that, a machine gun is better than a bigger single shot gun as seen on BMP. I wish you well on your efforts for an adequate requirement and successful development of a FIFV — the Bundeswehr did not have much luck with SPz MARDER 2 and is trying a new approach — we could use some luck ourselves!

ALBERT KLENKE
Oberst a.D.
Sankt Augustin, Germany